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INAUGURAL MESSAGE OF J. M. PERRYMAN

Executive Office

Okmulgee, I. T.

December 5, 1883

Gentlemen of the National Council

Muskogee Nation:

In older times when the Muskogee confederacy lived in the glory of its strength and pride they were in some respects favored people. With a large population they had many good and wise men of mature age and experience who might at any time be called to the head of public affairs. In those days they had their McIntoshes and McGillovays whose names as great chiefs and diplomats were known and honored throughout the entire country of the south. They had their Weatherfords and Monarwes whose names as great captains and patriot warriors, in time of war, have been inscribed high upon the monument of

American history. Later down we in our own day had our Ophle Yoholar, the great law giver of the Tuckabatchus, who during the late war among the States, rather than accede to what he conceived to be a violation of treaty, preferred to and did lay down his life in its support on the bleak and frozen plains of Kansas. We find his name mentioned in the official papers of the American government in terms of the highest praise, and it makes the heart of the savage Muskogee Indian swell with pride to read the spontaneous and just encomiums thus heaped upon him by another race. We had also the patriarchal Tuckabatchee Micco and Roly McIntosh, whose proverbial love and affection for their people and race are remembered with gratitude, not by Muskogee alone, but even some of the more primitive of our race inhabiting the far west. These like faithful actors have played their parts in the great theatre of human action and passed off the stage of events. It is true we have raised no graven images of stone inscribed with extravagant legends, not of what they were, but what they might have been, to mark their memory among men. But better and truer than all this we have their memory graven upon the tablets of the hearts of every Muskogee Indian, and there it will remain as long as our language shall exist. The mutations of time and instability of human affairs have so wrought upon us that we no more number among us those

honored names, and we find the Muskokes poor in this class of men, so much so that we have reached the exigency where you have thought it wise to intrust the care of your affairs to a watchman unripe in experience whatever his inclinations may be. Contrasting my feeble abilities with those of the great men of the past you can well understand why feelings of embarrassment characterize my appearance before you this morning.

Departing in the march of progress from the customs of our forefathers we have had our political parties and candidates for office, and parties and men have striven with such power and industry for the supremacy of some political favorite or idol measure, until the very air seemed dim with the smoke and tumult of the conflict. Out of all this you have decided to call me from your ranks to become the standard-bearer, not of this or that political party, I hope, but of the entire Muskoke Nation and people. I cheerfully accept the charge and I shall strive to characterize my official course with decision of purpose and justice of and under whatever contingencies I may be called to act.

In this you have conferred on me an honor to which I have not aspired, an honor accompanied with responsibilities so great that it is not without something of trepidation that I lay my hands to the helm. If the genius of the Muskogee government contemplated intrusting the care of their interests

of the people to the Chief alone; if it were left to him alone to furnish the wisdom necessary to plan and develop the ways and means to secure the greatest good to the greatest number of Muskoke citizens, my case might indeed seem discouraging, but this is not so, and it is a matter for congratulation that we are all favored with a government republican in form, where no monarch rules, but where government is the immediate outgrowth of the people themselves. I take encouragement then in the fact that I am not alone in struggle and work that opens up before you and me upon this new field. We well may rejoice that our predecessors have bequeathed to us a country and government wherein the great interests of education, civilization and good government rests in the hands of no one man, but in the keeping and control of the Council and its six tributaries, known as district officers. I am but one person and at best can but do the work of one, but you are many and many do much and it is to you in main that I will look for those means and methods that will assure to this people the blessings of good government. You and I, and all who hold any position of trust under authority of the people, are responsible to them for a government that will assure justice to the poor as well as the rich, the weak as well as the strong, and one which will guarantee that protection of person and property

so needful in our country, and without which harmony and progress become absolute impossibilities. We say we desire the material, the moral and intellectual advancement of the Muskoke people. Now if we are sincere in these professions we have first to cause our people to feel safe and secure by surrounding them with wholesome laws and establishing a system of enforcement of them, that will surely punish the guilty and as certainly protect the innocent. After security shall have been secured it will be no very difficult task, I believe, to build a super-structure of which all may be justly proud. Under our institutions our people have the right to expect this, indeed it is their just heritage, and it is the duty of every officer always to exert his best efforts to meet this demand. No Indian nation perhaps for the last fifty years has been beset by a like amount of adversity as that which has clouded the political sky of the Muskoke people for the last eighteen months. The integrity of the machinery of our government has been shocked and shaken by internal dissensions fanned into being oftentimes by the groveling parasites and barnacles contributed by surrounding states, and sometimes by our sister nations who on one pretense or another have lodged themselves in the interstices of our political fabric until our case seemed hopeless indeed. You have weathered the storm like

faithful warriors, and I invite all parties and all men, the full and the half blood, colored men, and every true Muskoke citizen to join with me in our common and continued effort to rid our country of such characters, combat and eliminate the bad influences left by them and heal up the wounds that have bled so long. You must do this if you would preserve the honor and integrity of institutions and effectively lead the Muskoke people out into the open sea of success and prosperity. While the unfortunate events of the past eighteen months have entailed untold hardships upon our people and arrested our progress for the period perhaps of many decades, still let us hope they have not passed without teaching us some valuable lessons of statesmanship, which, like the mariner's compass, will enable us in the future to avoid the rocks and breakers that have brought us such bitter experiences. Let each citizen so occupy his time and talents in the rebuilding and restoration of the waste places of his country, that no time will be left for the exhibition of the petty feelings and controversies that have so often grown into mountains of evil and thrown the pall of mourning over the affairs of our country. The Muskokes are a capable people possessing of a glorious country but abounding in all those natural conditions requisite to the material wealth of nations. You have broad and fertile

prairies adequate to the grazing of countless herds, and the production of millions of bushels of grain. You have your bottom lands, your uplands of timber sufficient to supply all your demands. You have exhaustless coal fields, so rich and so vast in extent that with proper management a revenue may be derived from them sufficient to cancel every debt we owe and enrich every Muskoke citizen besides. You have all the streams of water necessary and a climate whose salubrity and fitness for contributing to the wealth and comfort of man is unexcelled anywhere else on this continent, and it is all yours. We have but to make a proper use of it, and no power can prevent you from becoming the most prosperous, intelligent and happy people in the world. I venture these remarks because it has appeared as if we did not appreciate the grand opportunities lying all about us. While I must insist that it is the duty of this Council and every other officer under the government to address himself to a calm and serious study of these great interests, to the end that they may be intelligently utilized and made to contribute to the welfare of our people. Your attitude is that of the most collected wisdom and sense of the nation, and it is to you we must look to the intelligent solution of this and like problems that shall arise in the future. As for myself I entertain no hope of successfully grappling these,

but shall always endeavor to render such aid as my humble ability and judgment will dictate. Neither do I hope in my official relations with you to be able to propound only such measures and propositions as shall be pleasing and exceptable to the views of all men and all parties. Wiser men who have gone before me have each and all failed in this, and it would be presumption in me to suppose myself an exception, but whatever mistakes I may make in my official capacity in the matters of public policy, whatever views or opinions my actions in the line of duty may run athwarts, still will my purpose ever point to what I conceive to be necessary to a faithful preservation of the best interests of the Muskoke people. I shall endeavor to make this the beacon light that shall guide me in the path of duty, and in conclusion let me ask the aid which your suffrage entitles me to expect in this great work of every true Muskoke citizen.

J. M. PERRYMAN

Principal Chief, M. N.

S. B. Callahan

Private Secretary.